

Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
August 28, 2012 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office

Others present:

Joseph G. Schorn, Schorn Construction Company Inc.
David S. Johnson, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the August meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the August 28th agenda. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the August agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Reading Plaza Supermarket Expansion – final land development plan [0:00.47]

Mr. Schorn, the project manager and engineer, explained their intent to expand the existing supermarket by 2280 square feet to accommodate additional produce space and a relocated deli section. He said he had already met with the Public Works Department regarding stormwater issues. And though the addition will occupy existing areas of paving, they will remove and landscape six other small areas of existing impervious cover, in order to mitigate stormwater impacts. He said the City Arborist gave a verbal approval of the landscaping plan. He felt he had addressed most of the Planning Office's review, except for the PA One Call markings of the existing utilities. He said all connections to the addition will be made from the existing building. Asked about the façade effects and materials, Mr. Schorn said they'd match the existing roofline in pitch and height, the front façade will be aligned and in matching brick, the south wall and back will be faced in stucco, and one additional door will be added for emergency egress. No other fenestration is planned. And the existing 'lunch truck', that typically occupies the area of the planned expansion, will no longer be on-site. Parking spaces currently up against the building will be eliminated; 154 off-street spaces are required per zoning, and 160 will remain. Any fill excavated from the landscaping beds will be used on-site, in preparing the foundation of the expansion. He felt the added landscaping would break up the monotony, and detailed the quantities. Mr. Lauter applauded the landscaping effort, but expressed concern with the maintenance and durability of at-grade, unguarded beds. Mr. Schorn thought the excessive width of the entrance driveways should limit vehicular damages, and assumed snowplows would be the bigger concern. He said existing intersection sight lines should be preserved with the landscaping chosen. He said the existing loading dock will remain, unchanged. He mentioned that the owner was eager to get started, and finished for the holiday season, though he understood there was a complication. Mr. Miller acknowledged the quick response to the review letter, and explained that the Commission can't preempt the County Planning review period. He hoped to have resolved everything for the September meeting, when plans might be presented for both vote and signature. He speculated that excavation permits might be granted in advance. Mr. Schorn estimated about a week for that phase, and eight or nine weeks in total. The members agreed that, barring any major revisions, it would be acceptable for staff to present the follow-up plan in September.

Mr. Lauter moved to table the final land development plan for the "Reading Plaza Supermarket Expansion". Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the final plan.

South Campus Project (Alvernia University) – modifications to the record plan [0:26.36]

Mr. Miller, presenting on behalf of the University, opined that the proposed changes would not equate to 'land development' if considered separately. He explained the intent to connect the driveways between the Bernardine Sisters' property and the University's, something they had previously studied but only recently formalized. A campus master plan recommends visitors enter the campus through the more-formal Convent driveway. Instead of a full revision plan and review, he preferred to simply seek an updated plan for the Planning Office file. Other changes include a more-circular arrangement of the Francis Hall parking area, and an extension of a pedestrian path. He hadn't yet received a written review from the Public Works Department. And there remained

an issue with the design of the pedestrian path, as shown, which doubles as an emergency access bearing the loads of the largest fire-fighting vehicles in-mind. There is a verbal agreement to revise the plan to the Fire Marshal's specification. Additional signage is planned, and intended to match the theme of the new monument signage at the Angelica Park entrance. The dimensions are final and have been submitted to the Zoning Office, though the graphic details are not. Some other directional signage was also discussed. He explained that two landscape-architecture firms are involved, and somewhat complicate the communication.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the changes to the "South Campus Project" plan, as shown on a 'layout plan' dated August 3, 2012, subject to the approvals of the City Engineer and Conservation District for changes to the grading and stormwater management plans, the approval of the Fire Marshal for modifications to the stabilized 26-foot-wide emergency access lane, clarification of title and boundary issues between the Bernardine Sisters' 'Convent' and 'Villa' properties, and provision of two sealed copies of a revised final plan, detailing the present changes and referencing the 2011 record plan for the "South Campus Project". Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to conditionally approve the changes to Alvernia's South Campus Project.

Resolution #26-2012

Other business:

review the draft June 26, 2012 meeting minutes [0:37.43]

Following some explanation of context, Mr. Lauter moved to accept the June meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the June 26th meeting minutes.

Resolution #27-2012

Mr. Bealer reported that the Blighted Property Review Committee cancelled its July meeting because of a missed notification deadline, and speculated on its upcoming activity.

Mr. Lauter asked generally about a landowner's obligation to keep and maintain landscaping. Mr. Miller said the ordinances do require 'maintenance', and certainly where land developments plans are recorded. He called it a matter of will in enforcement, especially against the 'successors and assigns' of properties previously developed. Mr. Lauter noted some cases where landscaped areas are left for dead, and are littered. It surprised him that their owners, and management of commercial properties at least, tolerate the appearance. Mr. Miller noted that several urban renewal projects seem to be in such a condition, citing the use of public funds. The members agreed that landscaping doesn't have to be complex and require a lot of regular maintenance. They then discussed a trend toward low-maintenance and more natural landscaping forms, such as *xeriscaping*, and its appropriateness to urban environments.

On Mr. Lauter's motion, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the August 28th meeting. – 8:14p